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THE CARP

The carp sulk among the water lily leaves the shape of artists’ palettes, in the Monet pool, near the pastel bridge; retiring, already daubed by Nature; wary of Japonisme.
MORNING GRASS

At night we grappled in
the dark with making
life from water and
earth.
And when you gripped
my hand in that park,
your palm was moist
and cool as morning
grass.
ANKLE CHAIN

I hang the tinkling ankle chain over the photo frame. Why are your lips so prim? You did not know me then but I would conquer you a thousand times.
IN MIND’S EYE

The afternoon sun has turned the tree all to gold leaf. I save it in my mind, small like a bookmark, and tuck it away in this page of life, where it will glow and glisten again this night in mind’s eye.
Living with the Dead

It died, 
that thing of beauty, 
it died, 
though you wrestled 
with the corpse 
for many years 
you knew it was 
a dead thing,

its eyes would still open 
and it would walk 
from house to car, 
disappear 
for nights and weekends 
seeking the flesh 
of younger or richer men.

Sated, it would return, 
sink back 
into the waiting bed, 
turn cold and stiff 
and dead again 
until the next rising 
of a huntress moon.
At Prophecy Creek

The magnolia tree has bloomed.
It now sheds its blossoms,
Dropping petals into the pond
Where the stone bridge crosses
To the island with the gazebo.

The wedding guests have left,
The newlyweds driven away.
There is no one left but the caretaker
To watch the armada of pink boats
Sail in the stillness of the setting sun.
Broken Mirror

for Louis C. McKee

all that is left
are shards of glass
backed by silver,
pieces of a mirror
that no longer reflect
the man as he was,
an eye is seen here,
a finger there.

most shards hold
private visions
maybe only one
can recall,
perhaps not accurate,
but savored still.

these too may fade,
fragments of glass
turning dark,
as those passing through
this great room
of the world
struggle not to wound
bare feet or naked hearts.


**Dancing in the Sky**

Sometimes at night
I fly away,

Leap over houses
With strong arm-wings,

Flirt with angels
In a multicolored sky,

Yet still manage
To slip back

Between blue sheets
Before the cold sunrise.

Why should the day
Count for more

Than our lives
In slumber?

Don’t tell me
This is real

And this is not.
All is part

Of who we are
And how we got here.
Lies

Words hang, twist in the air.
Lies, lies, they are always there.

So easy to spit out what
We hope to be true,

While the details light
a fire underground,

Smoke eking out
When your guard’s down,

Choking, smothering
With the truth

You could have lived
Better without knowing.
My Favorite Ride

A great horse. A great ride.
Bareback or saddled,
Let her go, let her go.

She will take you over mountains.
Through forests and plains,
A mare worth the riding.

Let her go. Let her go,
Incapable of staying
In manmade barn or corral.

Let her go. Let her go.
Too swift to chase down
When she runs.

Let her go. Let her go,
In the mornings she come back
Seeking feed and rest.

Let her go. Let her go.
Her shoes are worn out
And her back shows the marks

Of all the weight she has carried
Over unseen fields and marsh.
Let her go. Let her go. Let her go.
A heavy sack

Words you should not have said
Hang in the air heavy as lead.

You can never take them back,
Only collect them in a sack,

Carry them all your days,
Back bent, eyes far away.
The Meat Jewel

the human face
is a meat jewel
glowing with
internal brilliance.

but, oh,
watch out for the flies
that are bound to gather.

think your meat thoughts.
dream your meat dreams.
smell your meat stench

before the rot sets in.
Seeking harmony

The “you” that is you,
or may be you,
and the “I” that I am,
or could be
are mere instruments,
fiddles without bows,
waiting for fingers
to caress and pluck
our strings
and make us sing

The reverberating chords
of two instruments in concert
constitute a new harmony,
a being called into existence
by radiant sounds,
a wave splashing
across valley and mountain,
disturbing the atmosphere
of a small planet
before falling silent
as rainfall
on a spring evening
after the parrots and dinosaurs
have been put to bed.
**Pentecost**

The fire rained down  
From the sky  
And landed on our heads,  
Flames danced  
Above our brows  
And we spoke in many tongues  
As our flesh melted  
And our only words  
Became thoughts.

We glided holy wounded  
Among twisted beams of steel  
And the powdered rubble  
Of our cities.  
In this end we are all one,  
Joined by the light  
And the pain of atoms,  
Right down to  
Our particle being.
The wound

the wound grows
imperceptibly smaller,
healing a little more each day
until there is no more gash
showing red skin
that occasionally leaks blood.

the wound heals.
it goes away,
but the scar, the scar,
it stays, it stays.
The Ball

by Jack R. Wesdorp
Character list

[lighting highlights character attributes]

Flame: Flame is male. He wears a red sweatsuit and red shoes. His hair is red and his headgear is a scarlet five-pointed star. His logo is an orange delta. His stave is surmounted by a lantern. His instrument is the bodhran drum.

Flood: Flood is female. She wears a green sweatsuit and green suede shoes. Her hair is blonde and her headgear is a rainbow halo. Her logo is a light green triangle. Her stave has a pitcher. Her instrument is the systrum.

Flight: Flight is male. He wears a light-grey sweatsuit and black boots. His hair is close-cropped grey and his headgear is an ibis feather. His stave bears a bellows. His instrument is the tambourine.

Friend: Friend is female. She wears a black sweatsuit and is barefoot. Her hair is black and her headgear is flowers. Her stave has a willendorf statue. Her instrument is the ocarina.

Set

Allow 12 feet of bare stage for tossing the ball around. Then, a 6-foot round table top in center stage, it seems to float 2 feet above the stage floor. Shroud the table supports. A round ormulu standing border at the circumference. On the table, an armillary sphere made from concentric nesting bicycle rims, 56”, 26”, 24”, the outer loop mounted as a portal from the audience point of view, painted flat black, the second smaller hoop mounted at 22 degrees ecliptic, with stars glued round the rim, the smallest hoop holds a crescent moon at 45 degrees. Centered on a pedestal in the middle of the table, inside the armillary sphere, is an inflated beachball with the continents and oceans.

Beyond that a dias, and on the dias 4 cubes, 2 feet on a side, the tops have hinged lids. There are changeable letters on the sides, first spelling GODS. Each hollow cube allows access from under the dias for the blue handmaidens of the gods. Dias is wide enough for comfortable access and walkabout. Dias is slightly concave with 2 collateral descending steps facing front. Behind the dias is a wide hidden staircase like bleachers that allows the gods to ascend together onto the platform. Audience point of view is looking from outside the universe. See the Annex for a detailed list of the contents of each cube.
[The four pillars of heaven—Flame, Flood, Flight and Friend—walk up from a dark downstage. They ascend the dias from behind, plant their staves in sockets, receive bowls of ambrosia from blue hands thrust through the lids of the four cubes. They take their seats on the cubes, face the audience, spoon up the pudding, natter about nothing.]

Flood: Goody fruity.
Flight: [to Friend] Did you make the marshmallows?
Friend: Heaven’s finest.
Flood: Next time could we have some banana in it?
Flame: And white chocolate.
Friend: And spritz some likker on it.
Flight: Bread pudding it.
Flame: Figgy pudding.
Flight: Hasty pudding.
Friend: Tasty pudding.
Flood: Waste no pudding here.

[They finish the ambrosia, blue hands relieve them of the debris, pass up manna cookies from behind the cubes.]

[Flame, Flood and Flight rotate their cubes 90 degrees to face Friend. She still faces the audience. The letters on the cubes spell NUTS.]

Flood: [to Friend] Macadamia?
Friend: About half with almonds from Transylvania, and some pecan.
Flood: He can.
Flight: We can.
Friend: Really good raspberry honey.
Flood: And some ouzo.
Flight: Ah ha! Licorice, the secret ingredient, one drop of the essential oil.

Flame: Excellent vintage.

Flight: Maybe some marzipan?

Friend: Next time.

[They finish the manna, stand, receive libations through the lids, cubes turn to spell BURP.]

Flood: [sniffs] Tartish, not too much oakum. Very nice.

[They toast each other in turn.]

Flame: I am the creative impulse. I am one.

Friend: I am the receptive containment. We are two.

Friend: [pointing to table] What’s that do?

[They notice the ball, inspect it, rotate the cubes to spell WORK.]

Friend: Let the witnesses attend.

Flood: So what should we do about that one?

Flight: Is it worth doing?

Flood: It’s in the Goldilocks zone, not too far and cold, not too close and hot, nice stable sun.

Flood: I take it that it shall be life?

Flame: Agreed. Life is much more fun.

Flight: Let long life be the holy grail of medicine.

Flood: Life sings in me. Be it so.

Flight: I channel the power. We are three as one.

Friend: I offer you gravity, lust, attraction, and dirt on your knees. Foursquare. Something out of nothing. We build from thin air. Wind in your hair.

Friend: Care for some euphoria?
[She passes an empty vaporizer, they all whiff the breeze, settle into jolly communion.]

Flame: Ooga bouga.

Flood: Umma gumma.

Flight: Obah dia.

Friend: Bougie wougie.

Flame: Allah kazam.

Flood: Om mani padme om.

Flight: Abracadabra.


Flame: Their terminal species, shall they wear beryllium carapaces and eat of the Boron Flood?

Flood: Or shall they be sulfurous chlorine breathers?

Flight: Or oxygen nitrogen collaborators?


Flight: Long-chain hydrocarbons. Yes!

Flame: [to Flood] So shall it be a water planet?

Flood: Oh, yes, let’s do one of those.

Friend: With a moon to stir up the primordial soup.

Flight: Atmosphere. It’ll have to be mostly nitrogen. We’ll have to start from methane crystals and ammonia, then cyanides.

Flood: Organic DNA.

Flame: It has a heavy iron core. We go with a magnetic field?

Flood + Friend: Spin it up.
Friend: Could we have colors?

Flight: Throw in some manganese nodules.

Flame: Agreed. All right then. Close ranks.

[Any debris gets removed by blue hands. The gods retrieve their staves, face the ball.]

Flame: I give you fire and light.

Flood: Phosphorus fire burns in my water,

Flight: Blue refracts through my prism.

Friend: Current surges through my copper.

[They point their staves.]

Flight: Flame, Flood, Flight, Friend. We are four as one. [Pinspots on the ball come on.] Such marvelous sparkles we smithy.

[They replace the staves, descend by the horseshoe steps, surround and circle the table, admire their creation.]

Flame: What’s to do now?

Flood: Parse it down. Cut it up. Make it easy.

Friend: We should give them sufficient wherewithal to develop it.

Flood: [retrieves an hourglass from her cube, places it on the table] Enough time.

Flame: [sets pyramid on table] Eye in the sky.

Flood: [removes the ball from its pedestal, cradles it.] Give them protection.

Flame: [adds kitchen matches] Little wands that make fire.

[Flame takes the ball.]

Friend: [adds a wide glass bowl] Here. You’re gonna need this. Let’s see what this fire portends.

[A blue hand offers Flood a pitcher of water, which she pours into the bowl. They crowd around, gaze into the bowl.]
Flame: Ah! More better fire?


Friend: [adds round mirror] That you may know yourself.

[Flame tosses ball to Friend.]

Flight: And the means to immortality. [lays a caduceus on the table] The means to heal yourself.

Flood: The cup of knowledge. [sets the green grail down]

Friend: Pheromones. [to Flight] Follow me.

[She gives the ball to Flight. Flight passes it to Flame.]

Friend: [gets a turtle shell rattle from her cube] Time of the turtle, spark of zirconium, vitality of the rabbit.

[Flame extends the ball towards Friend, who waves the rattle over the ball, sets the rattle beside the caduceus.]

Flame: [considers] They’ll need help. It’s a carnivorous world. [retrieves a propane torch, ignites it, shuts it down.]

Flame: [to the ball] Careful with this one. You’re already playing with matches.

[Friend and Flood confer over the ball.]

Flood: [adds the rainstick] That rain wash the world.

[Flood takes the ball from Flame.]

Friend: [adds a rose in a vase] Flower and flourish, be glad. Partake of beauty.

[Flood tosses the ball to Friend, who passes it to Flame.]

Flight: [adds a model airplane] Let science and art merge. Be struck in stone.

Friend [adds a hammer and chisel] Be thou The Pietà.

Flight: The Parthenon.

Flood: Be thou Stonehenge.
Flame: Tabernacles of strange configuration.

[Flame tosses the ball to Flight.]

Friend: Draw down the moon. [adds a sickle] [to Flight] Toss it out to them. [Points to audience] Let’s see what they’ll do with it.

[Flight tosses the ball to the audience.]

Flood: Yes. [to the audience, pointing] Pass it around. Here’s your chance at the real ceremonial deal. [audience participation, one plant will deflate the ball and pass it back]

Friend: [gets a large conch shell, admires it] How marvellous to live in such an elegant home. [hands it to Flight] Blow some air through it so that the ancient Fibonacci spiral may continue to expand.

[As Flight blows the conch shell, the cubes spell out HELP.]

Flame + Flight: Let the call go forth.

Flame: [gets a Geiger counter, turns it on, we hear random clicks.] That’s the normal background count. [He points it at the audience, the clicks increase.] Oh, you’re in trouble. You’re hot with idodine, cesium and uranium.

Flood: [retrieves a starfish.] Another endangered species. Alas for biodiversity.

Flight: [gets a Star Trek Enterprise model] That you may explore, find others like you, escape from your oubliette.

Friend: [throws a handful of coins on the table] Here. It’s your money. Pay your way.

Flame: Science is expensive.

Flight: The spinoff is worth it.

Flood: Life demands enterprise.

Friend: Light a candle.

[Friend retrieves a gimmicked candle, sets it on the pedestal inside the armillary sphere. They point, it lights untouched.]

Friend: Be thou the spirit of earth.
Flood: [indicates audience] I think they’ll be wanting some encouragement.

Flood: [retrieves brass systrum] Perogative of the priestess, used to mark celebrations and moments of joy. [starts the cadence, dances]

Flame: [gets hoop drum] The bodhran. Used to accompany rites of passage. [enters cadence]

Flight: [with a tambourine] The ancient gladhand extended on stage and at the door. [joins in]

Friend: [with washboard and wooden spoon] Let’s pick it up. [They speed up.]

All: [to audience]  
Sun’s gonna shine  
Rain’s gonna fall  
Wind blowing through  
Grain growing tall.  
Make the ball spin  
Fill your cup up  
We’re all singing  
Will the world to wake  
On a perfect April morning.  
The rain to drop, the snow to flake.  
Bebop a reebop a little faster. Full stop!

[One by one the percussion drops out, leaving only the hoop drum. Friend steps to centre stage, withdraws an ocarina from her bodice and blows an ascending scale in major mode.]

All: Bring back the ball.  
Show us your stuff.  
Did it get mauled  
Or was it loved?  
Toss it down here  
Show us your hand  
So we may see her  
And understand.

[The cubes spell out HOPE. Hoop drum continues, the other instruments are laid aside.]

Flood: I think they’re embarrassed.

Flight: I think they’re hiding something.

Friend: Oubliettes stink, don’t they?
Flight: Well, look at it this way. It circles a minor sun in a backwater arm of a spiral galaxy. They’re parochial. Juvenile.

Flood: But of promise. Great events come out of deserts and deep places.

Friend: We can hope.

Flight: Have faith.

Flood: Extend charity.

[The ball lands on the stage partially deflated, fouled with ash and soot. The hoop drum punctuates its fall. Flame passes the hoop drum over the ball, inverts the hoop, looks at the ball as through a lens.]

Flame: Doesn’t even get a passing grade.

[They surround the ball. Friend prods it with her toe.]

Flood: Knocked the stuffing right out of it.

Flight: Seems a little short on breath.

Friend: What’s that smell?

Flight: Hydrogen sulfide. From oil. Long-dead peat bogs better left underground.

Friend: And that grit … crap.


Friend: It stinks. The ball stinks of incompetence.

Flight: It stinks of greed.

Friend: What’s to be done with Earth?

[Flame thumps the drum one last time and lays it with the rest of the instruments.]

Flame: Toss it into the furnace. Let the sun consume it.

Flood: Kick it way the hell out. Make it get lost. Forget it.
Flight: [runs his finger over the ball] Just a very few did this. The starfish did not choose to go extinct.

Friend: Is it fixable? Is it worth fixing?

Flight: [to the ball] Lustral pearl of the deep, our fair sister, will no one speak for you?

[From the darkened auditorium, a child’s voice: “Please!”]

Flood: Oh. This changes everything.

Flame: That will do it.

[Friend takes the ball from Flight and washes it off. Blue hand offers a towel. Flame wipes it dry, Flight blows it up and gives it to Friend.]

Friend: [to audience] Zuzu, my dear, are you out there? Would you come down here, please?

[Zuzu walks down the aisle, receives the ball from Friend.]


[They consider, come to agreement]

Flight: Too little, too late.

Flame: Most people want instant light, water piped to the sink, wheels on demand.

Flight: There’s always alternatives. They have choice. Retooling is expensive. Inertia persists.

[Flood puts the ball in the glass bowl. Blue hand offers sprinkler can, Flood showers ball, dries it off with the towel.]

Friend: [to Zuzu] Here, you keep it for a while. Grow with it. Pass it on.

Flame: [Hand on Zuzu’s shoulder, to audience] Treat her gently and kindly. She is your most precious possession. She is the future.

[They back away and kneel around her, hands up, palms forward, hold till closing bell on the PA.]

[Curtain.]
Annex
Props Handed out of the Cubes

Flame: Pyramid (glass prism), matches, propane torch, Geiger counter, hoop drum
Flood: Hourglass, green grail, rainstick, systrum, starfish, sprinkler can, pitcher of water
Flight: Knife, caduceus, model airplane, Star Trek Enterprise model, tambourine, towel
Friend: Wide glass bowl, mirror, turtle shell rattle, rose in vase, hammer and chisel, sickle, conch shell, coins, gimmicked candle, washboard and wooden spoon.

HF
October 25, 2017
Patricia Walsh

Cheating Karma

Cheating on bended knee, sexually enhancing
Falling asleep at the important, censuring
Amplifying longings flying the nest
Where they are loud, no bother, all in hand.

Drink the standard elixir of station
Eating to disconnect an archived effort
Coalescing by word of mouth remembering
Whittling down the unnecessary glory.

Nit and pick my soul. Prepared for domination
Hit out of left field in a Christ-like ball
Conversation service a long-sought sentence
Living through a purgatory my own fault.

Coming onto betters, misjudged shots
Better in every way, a hand-earned truth
Average girth a cost to be settled
Medication aside, letting wrong things go.

Blunt razors will always cut you
Celestial housekeeping serves its purpose
Congregating with the right sort, shaking
Embarrassed by a lifetime of frippery.

Promised out of the rain. Shamed by right actions
Inventing hardcore virtue to stop the rot
Merging sanctity with the sense of purpose
Living lies without a generous fear.
Common Perfume

A concatenated V-sign reigns ingloriously
Obscuring the intelligent displays of injury
Over and above the guttered streets
Lucky to perform for all and sundry
An opportune house-fire fulfils decadence.

Framed by the distortionary, happily waning
Hungry for denouement in a shutter’s blink
Cutting off essentials to save grace
Various hues of houses stand their ground
Staid in their purpose, brick upon brick.

Imaginary children stop and holler
For basic food and ready attention
Loving every moment of their intrusion
Case by case interruption for betterment
Meal-ticket individual an unwilling party.

Doing one’s own thing. What is that precisely?
Hitting on circumstance as best advised
Flying the sorry coop where expected
Starving for farflung experience over head
Outside of the self-imposed bubble of this.

Timing off the essence, resident Antichrists
Polish off the remaining finger-food
Only going so far as the empty spirit allows
Breaking strides where advised, a common touch,
Now holy God, dance for me.
Rigid Movement

Borrowing my laptop to take over the world
Hitching onto my star for adventure
Archiving revenge before it even existed
Local sustenance down to a cup of tea.

The rebel in you was loved, right up to marriage.
Robin Hood factors an attractive oversight.
Scary friends already have one staying over
Defunct cars giving shelters to the masses.

Tea alone, giving sustenance, a daily feat
Last-century goodness fading fast
Looking over shoulders on a better day
Overgrown fantasies an enjoyable task.

Arguing against type, the definition of sound
Jettisoning decorum for sake of fantasy
Boredom reduction strategies fuel your ego
That is life, nothing can declare otherwise.

A man before you hit the ground. Compassion
For loss of innocence of sorts, a primal mistake
Settling internal matters a grateful nod at least
For my back, hitting back towards illegal home.

Winding up par excellence, borrowing cigarettes
Distant glory a reward for true experience
Anti-depressant highs like the same indifference
Eschewing type to fulfil a private prophecy.
Punctuation

So much for finality, crying under orders
Acrid perfume does a desired function
Falling down at the chemists, decorum allowing
Abandoned aspiration do no-one any favours.

Studying for petty kingdoms, washed over you
Plight under de Valera is never forgotten
A miniature start-up fuels the inclusion
Of what never existed, an interesting hireaeth.

Missing deadlines to keep the wedding sweet
Money follows money in a crazy game
Blood permitting, washing away sins
Returning to mind for a sample time.

Nicely alcoholic, sleeping through lunchtime
Chatting to strangers a perfect deed
Archived the impossible of natural talent
Cheap surprises horrifying at other causes.

Plugging in hearts of stone, illuminate tables
Clichéd as virtue on a summer’s night
The literary planner goes by timetables
Stricter the better, no offence taken.

Eating what you lack. Talent is what it seems
In no body part as such, perhaps in the heart
Dark fantastic your soul way forward
Hitting from loss, still not introduced.
Christopher DeGroot

A Herald Blears

Isolate and sluicing,
tempting with lambent yielding,
the old scaffold should disband

and learn now
only to abridge is to own.

........................................

A voice sinks,
and there is a tremulous overtone.

Dream-led and arterial,
a herald blears.
Who Are You?

In the hot maelstrom,
the jackal of the darkness
and his friend are two.

Who are you?
Your life is strange.
Your blood is blue.
Your breath is black.
A Just Life

A just life cannot be derived from anything other than the gaze from without into our solitude, afraid so gentle: then we are seen and our need is all.
Our Purpose

Our purpose is an essence that rewards us with its presence. How can we know this essence, unless we seek a blanket with which to cover vision from truth’s blinding glare? We cannot face the winner of the paradox we bear.
Michael Ceraolo

**Cleveland Haiku #376**

Deep mystery---
some woods not in a park
left in the city

**Cleveland Haiku #378**

Traveling
through the train tunnel---
always night

**Cleveland Haiku #379**

The empty park
eagerly anticipates
the end of school

**Cleveland Haiku #400**

A pile
of broken concrete slabs
with steel skeleton showing
Cleveland Haiku #412
Bus rider---
gray eyes
with great light

Cleveland Haiku #414
Ghost town squared---
abandoned industrial area
at night

Cleveland Haiku #423
Signage---
CARD PARTY
at a religious shrine

Cleveland Haiku #424
Interloper---
lone home
in an industrial area

Cleveland Haiku #425
Guardrail
forcibly driven
off guard duty
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